

Intelligence Information Cable

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COUNTRY SOUTH VIETNAM

DOI 6 FEBRUARY 1968

SUBJECT SITUATION APPRAISAL: ANALYSIS OF VIETNAMESE ATTITUDES
IN WAKE OF VIET CONG ATTACK ON SAIGON

ACQ VIETNAM, SAIGON (6 FEBRUARY 1968)

FIELD NO.

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AVAILABLE TO HIM AT THE TIME OF ITS PREPARATION.

SUMMARY: THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT AND PERHAPS THE
DECISIVE FACTOR IN THE FAILURE OF THE VIET CONG (VC) ASSAULT PLAN
HAS BEEN THE ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE VC
EFFORT. PEOPLE HAVE BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THE STRENGTH SHOWN BY THE
VC BUT ENRAGED BY THEIR VIOLATION OF THE TET PERIOD. THEY NOW SEEM
TO REALIZE THAT THE VC ARE NOT TO BE TRUSTED. FOR MANY, IT WAS

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THEIR FIRST PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE VC TERROR ABOUT WHICH THEY HAD HEARD BUT TO WHICH THEY FELT IMMUNE. POPULAR ATTITUDES TOWARD THE GOVERNMENT (GVN) ARE MIXED. THE GVN IS FAULTED FOR HAVING BEEN CAUGHT UNPREPARED BUT ITS REACTION TO THE VC ASSAULT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN WELL RECEIVED. THE THREAT OF A VC TAKEOVER HAS TENDED TO MUTE POLITICAL DIFFERENCES AND, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, TO CREATE A SEMBLANCE OF UNITY. HOWEVER, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO DATE THAT ANY IMPORTANT GROUP IS SUBLIMATING VITAL INTERESTS. THE ULTIMATE REACTION WILL PROBABLY DEPEND HEAVILY ON HOW THE GVN HANDLES THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE ATTACK. VARIOUS GVN OFFICIALS ARE BEING CRITICIZED AND IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MAY UNDERTAKE AN INVESTIGATION TO AFFIX BLAME FOR REAL OR ALLEGED SHORTCOMINGS ONCE THE SITUATION HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL. THE ATTACK HAS PROMOTED TEMPORARY UNITY AND OFFERS A CHANCE TO CONSOLIDATE IT, BUT THE FORCES DIVIDING VIETNAMESE STILL REMAIN STRONG. OVERALL REACTIONS TO THE U.S. ROLE ARE FAVORABLE, BUT A SURPRISINGLY LARGE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE BELIEVE, OR PROFESS TO BELIEVE, THAT THE U.S. SOMEHOW CONNIVED WITH THE VC. VARIOUS AND CONTRADICTORY REASONS ARE ADVANCED. ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION IS THAT MANY VIETNAMESE ARE CONVINCED THAT NOTHING HAPPENS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

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UNLESS THE AMERICANS WANT IT TO HAPPEN. HOSTILITY TOWARD AMERICANS COULD BECOME A SERIOUS PROBLEM IF CONTINUED VC ATTACKS IN SAIGON SHOULD REQUIRE STRONG U.S. COUNTERMEASURES IN HEAVILY POPULATED AREAS, WITH A RESULTING HEAVY TOLL IN CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND PROPERTY DAMAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. THIS REPORT ATTEMPTS TO COLLATE VIETNAMESE OPINIONS TOWARD THE RECENT ATTACKS BY VIET CONG (VC) FORCES ON THE CITY OF SAIGON. (PROVINCIAL ATTITUDES WILL BE COVERED IN A SEPARATE REPORT.) NATURALLY, IT IS DIFFICULT TO GENERALIZE ABOUT POPULAR PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTIONS, ESPECIALLY TO A STIMULUS OF SUCH SUDDENNESS, COMPLEXITY AND MAGNITUDE. EACH INDIVIDUAL HAS SEEN BUT A SMALL PART OF THE OVERALL PICTURE. HIS FIRST REACTIONS HAVE BEEN SHAPED LARGELY BY THESE LIMITED PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, OCCASIONALLY COLORED BY ESTABLISHED PREJUDICES OR INTERESTS. THOSE WHO HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY PERSONAL LOSSES UNDERSTANDABLY HAVE DIFFERENT EMOTIONAL FEELINGS THAN THOSE WHO HAVE MET THE DANGER VICARIOUSLY. FINALLY, IT IS NECESSARY TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN ATTITUDES WHICH ARE SHORT RUN AND SUPERFICIAL AND THOSE WHICH WILL HAVE LONG-LASTING EFFECT. MORE OVER, SOME ATTITUDES ARE CONDITIONED PRIMARILY BY THE

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DESIRE TO GAIN PERSONAL POLITICAL ADVANTAGE OR TO ADVANCE A PET IDEA OR PIQUE. IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT OTHERWISE.

2. OPINIONS, OF COURSE, ARE BASED ON WHAT PEOPLE THINK THE SITUATION IS, AND THIS MAY BE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM ACTUAL FACT. IN ANY FAST MOVING AND LARGE-SCALE OPERATION RUMORS ARE ALWAYS RAMPANT, A CONDITION WHICH CONTINUES PREVALENT IN SAIGON AT THIS TIME. THE GENERAL LACK OF NEWSPAPERS DURING MUCH OF THIS PERIOD, AND THE PROBLEMS INCURRED BY RADIO SAIGON, HAVE ADDED TO THE ACUTE LACK OF FACTUAL INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND, INDEED, TO MOST ELITE GROUPS. ANY ANALYSIS ALSO SUFFERS FROM THE LIMITED SAMPLING OF OPINIONS AVAILABLE. WHILE THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF REPORTING, THERE ARE ALSO OBVIOUS GAPS. ALTHOUGH OPINIONS HAVE BEEN RECORDED FROM A GOOD CROSS SECTION OF THE POPULATION, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR EXAMPLE, TO COME TO DEFINITE CONCLUSIONS AT THIS TIME AS TO DIFFERENCES IN GROUP VIEWS, BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND BUDDHISTS, BETWEEN NORTHERNERS AND SOUTHERNERS, AND BETWEEN THE WEALTHY AND THE POOR. DESPITE THESE AND OTHER LIMITATIONS WE BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE CERTAIN GENERALIZATIONS AND HAZARD SOME INTERPRETATIONS.

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3. FOR THE PURPOSE OF ORDERLY ANALYSIS WE HAVE DIVIDED THE REPORT INTO MAJOR SUB-SECTIONS: ATTITUDES OF THE VIETNAMESE TOWARD THE VIET CONG, ATTITUDES OF THE VIETNAMESE TOWARD THEIR GOVERNMENT, AND ATTITUDES OF THE VIETNAMESE TOWARD THE AMERICAN PRESENCE.

"ATTITUDES OF THE VIETNAMESE TOWARD THE VIET CONG"

4. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT AND PERHAPS THE DECISIVE FACTOR IN THE FAILURE OF THE VC MASTER PLAN HAS BEEN THE ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE VC EFFORT. PRACTICALLY ALL SOURCES COMMENT ON THE REFUSAL OF THE POPULACE TO SUPPORT THE VC CALL FOR A POPULAR UPRISING, EVEN IN THOSE PORTIONS OF THE CITY WHICH WERE TEMPORARILY UNDER VC CONTROL. TO THE CONTRARY, THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS TOOK CONCRETE ACTIONS TO OPPOSE THE VC. SIGNIFICANTLY, MANY OF THESE ACTIONS WERE TAKEN BY VIETNAMESE FROM THE LOW INCOME GROUPS, THE VERY CLASS THE VC WERE COUNTING ON FOR MAXIMUM SUPPORT. IN ONE CASE, THE VC TOOK REFUGE IN A CYCLO DRIVER'S HOME IN GIA DINH. THE CYCLO DRIVER MANAGED TO ESCAPE, DIRECTED ARVN FORCES TO HIS HOUSE AND TOLD THEM TO DESTROY IT IF NECESSARY TO GET RID OF THE VC. A GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM (GVN) POLICE REPORT STATES THAT INDIVIDUALS IN THE BAC HA DISTRICT DENOUNCED SUSPECTED VC MEMBERS TO THE AUTHORITIES, AND IN HANG XANH DISTRICT, GIA DINH, THE VILLAGERS REPORT CLASS SECRET [REDACTED]

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ATTACKED SUSPECTED VC MEMBERS WITH STICKS AND CAPTURED SIX OF THEM. IN OTHER CASES CITIZENS REPORTED THE PRESENCE OF A VC UNIT ON A ROAD LEADING TO THE QUANG TRUNG MILITARY TRAINING CENTER IN HOC MON DISTRICT, GIA DINH, AND VILLAGERS IN GIA DINH ALERTED POLICE THAT A COMPANY-SIZED VC UNIT PROBABLY WOULD LAUNCH AN ATTACK ON A POLICE FIELD FORCE. STILL ANOTHER SOURCE, A BUDDHIST, REPORTS THAT INCIDENTS OF THIS SORT HAVE BEEN FAIRLY COMMON IN THE CATHOLIC AREAS OF THE CITY. FINALLY, A VIETNAMESE ARMY COMMANDER STATED THAT IN ALL HIS VISITS TO SUBORDINATE UNITS HIS LIEUTENANTS HAD INFORMED HIM THAT THEY HAD SEEN NO EVIDENCE OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE VC.

5. SUCH DIFFERING POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS PERSONALITIES AS TRAN VAN TUYEN, THICH TAM GIAC AND NGUEYN VAN NGAI FEEL THAT THE VC BADLY MISREAD THE MOOD OF THE PEOPLE AND, CONSEQUENTLY, WERE SORELY DISAPPOINTED BY THE ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF SUPPORT AMONG ALL POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS AND ECONOMIC GROUPINGS. SOME VIETNAMESE BELIEVE, AS DOES NGAI, THAT WHILE THE VC MAY HAVE WON A PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTORY ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE, IT HAS SUFFERED A NET PSYCHOLOGICAL LOSS IN ITS OWN BACKYARD.

6. THERE ARE SEVERAL CONTRIBUTING ELEMENTS IN THE "NET LOSS". THE VC SURELY LOST CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY BY VIOLATING THE SPIRIT OF TET.

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THIS VIEW IS WELL SUMMED UP IN THE STATEMENT OF A MIDDLE-AGED VIETNAMESE NURSE WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED TOLERANCE FOR VC ACTS BECAUSE "THAT IS THE WAY ALL SOLDIERS ACT." SHE SAID, "THE VC DELIBERATELY SPOILED TET BY KILLING INNOCENT CIVILIANS AND BURNING HOMES. THEY DID IT AT A TIME WHEN ALL VIETNAMESE WANT A FEW DAYS OF PEACE AND CELEBRATION WITH THEIR FAMILIES. ALL THIS WOULD BE BAD AT ANY TIME BUT IT IS VERY, VERY BAD TO DO SUCH THINGS AT TET. EVERYONE WITH WHOM I HAVE TALKED IS VERY ANGRY AT THE VC AND FEELS IT WILL ALSO BRING BAD LUCK FOR THE COMING YEAR. IT IS LIKE AN EVIL MAN BEING THE FIRST GUEST OF A FAMILY ON TET, WHICH MEANS EVIL AND BAD LUCK FOR THE REST OF THE YEAR."

7. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE VC BROKE A MYTH WHEN THEY RENEGED ON THEIR PROMISE FOR A SEVEN-DAY TET TRUCE. THESE SOURCES CLAIM TO HAVE TALKED WITH A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO PREVIOUSLY BELIEVED VC STATEMENTS BUT NOW SAY THAT THE VC WILL NO LONGER BE TRUSTED. IN SIMILAR VEIN, FOR THE FIRST TIME MANY PEOPLE IN SAIGON WERE ABLE TO COMPARE STATEMENTS MADE ON THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (NFLSV) RADIO WITH NFLSV ACTION, AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE VICIOUSNESS OF THEIR ATTACK ON THE CITY. THE CREDIBILITY OF NFLSV RADIO BROADCASTS HAS SUFFERED. ONE SOURCE STATED THAT MANY OF HIS FRIENDS WHO HAD LISTENED TO THESE BROADCASTS REALIZED THAT THE INFOR-

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MATION GIVEN WAS UNTRUE. INSTALLATIONS REPORTEDLY WIPED OUT HAD SUFFERED ONLY SUPERFICIAL DAMAGE. PREDICTIONS MADE DID NOT COME TO PASS. VIETNAMESE ALSO EXPRESSED ANGER THAT THE VC SHOULD USE PAGODAS, HOSPITALS, AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS AS SANCTUARIES AND COMMAND POSTS. THE NET EFFECT OF THE VC ATTACKS MAY BE TO PUSH MANY RESIDENT OF THE CAPITAL WHO PREVIOUSLY STRADDLED THE FENCE INTO AN ANTI-VC POSTURE.

8. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ATTACKS BROUGHT A NEW APPRECIATION OF VC CAPABILITIES TO MANY URBAN DWELLERS WHO HERETOFORE HAD FELT RELATIVELY LITTLE PRESSURE FROM THE ENEMY. FOR THE FIRST TIME MANY CITIZENS IN SAIGON CAME FACE TO FACE WITH THE ENEMY AND EXPERIENCED FIRST HAND THE TERRORISM AND DESTRUCTION FROM WHICH THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY FELT IMMUNE. RESPECT FOR VC CAPABILITY HAS GROWN AND WITH IT A LATENT FEAR OF THE VC. MOST VIETNAMESE WERE SURPRISED THAT THE VC HAD THE ABILITY TO LAUNCH WIDESPREAD, SIMULTANEOUS ATTACKS OF SUCH INTENSITY, COORDINATION AND AUDACITY. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] HAS NOTED THE DIFFICULTY IN ASSESSING CURRENT ATTITUDES SINCE MANY PEOPLE ARE STILL IN A STATE OF SHOCK. HIS USE OF THE WORD WAS NOT FIGURATIVE. HE BELIEVES THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VC HAS BEEN ABLE TO DISRUPT THE LIFE OF SAIGON HAS IMPRESSED MOST PEOPLE. IN

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THIS SENSE THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THE VC GAINED AN INITIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL VICTORY. DESPITE THE ENHANCED CAPABILITY OF THE VC, A NUMBER OF SOURCES HAVE STATED THAT THEY HAVE FOUND NO INCREASE IN SENTIMENT AMONG VIETNAMESE FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT WITH THE VC.

9. INCREASED CONCERN OVER THE NEWLY REALIZED CAPABILITY OF THE VC HAS A POSITIVE ASPECT SINCE IT COULD LEAD TO AN INCREASED UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED FOR STRONG CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND PERHAPS FOR MEASURES NEEDED TO ORGANIZE EFFECTIVE DEFENSE AGAINST THE NEWLY APPRECIATED ENEMY.

"ATTITUDES OF THE VIETNAMESE TOWARD THEIR GOVERNMENT"

10. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, THE ATTITUDE OF THE VIETNAMESE TOWARD THEIR GOVERNMENT SEEMS MIXED. ON THE ONE HAND, THE GVN IS FAULTED FOR HAVING BEEN CAUGHT UNPREPARED, FOR NOT HAVING ADEQUATE INTELLIGENCE OF VC PLANS, INTENTIONS AND CAPABILITIES. A VIETNAMESE [REDACTED] COMMENTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD LOST MUCH POPULAR SUPPORT BECAUSE IT HAD NOT MOVED MORE FORCEFULLY AGAINST THE VC WHILE THEY WERE "ENROUTE TO SAIGON". [REDACTED] CLAIMS THE ATTACKS "REVEALED WEAKNESS AND INEFFECTIVENESS" OF THE GOVERNMENT SECURITY APPARATUS.

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11. IN CONTRAST, A NUMBER OF SOURCES ABSOLVE THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CHARGE OF INEFFECTIVENESS AND PRAISE THE REACTION OF THE ARVN FORCES.

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[REDACTED] WHO WITNESSED THE VIET CONG ARRIVING IN SAIGON ON THE NIGHT OF 30 JANUARY OVER THE BIEN HOA BRIDGE, AT FIRST THOUGHT THEY WERE ARVN TROOPS STAGING A COUP. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH AT FIRST HE WAS ANGRY AT THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS INABILITY TO PREVENT THE VC FROM ENTERING SAIGON, HIS ANGER VANISHED WHEN HE LEARNED HOW WIDESPREAD THE VC ATTACKS WERE. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] IS SATISFIED WITH THE ACTIONS OF THE GVN AND THE ARVN IN REACTING TO THE VC OFFENSIVE. [REDACTED] SAID THAT THIS FEELING IS SHARED BY MANY OF HIS COLLEAGUES. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] ALSO HAD EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION WITH THE ARVN REACTION. [REDACTED] A FORMER [REDACTED] OFFICER, SPENT ONE NIGHT DURING THE ATTACK AT THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF OPERATIONS CENTER. LOWER HOUSE MEMBERS [REDACTED] HAVE SPOKEN APPROVINGLY OF

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ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE GVN SO FAR. [REDACTED] A NORTHERN CATHOLIC, AGREES. ALTHOUGH HE FAULTS THE GVN FOR POOR CONTINGENCY PLANNING, HE SUPPORTS MOST OF ITS ACTIONS TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO THE VC THREAT.

12. THE SPECTRE OF A COMMUNIST TAKEOVER HAS AFFORDED CERTAIN PROMISING DEVELOPMENTS. IT HAS CLEARLY TENDED TO MUTE MINOR POLITICAL DIFFERENCES AND GENERATE A SEMBLANCE OF SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT. ANGER AT VC PERFIDY WILL NOT, HOWEVER, AUTOMATICALLY BE

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TRANSFORMED INTO ACTIVE AND POSITIVE SUPPORT FOR THE THIEU/KY ADMINISTRATION, NOR WILL THE PRESENT COMMENDABLE INTERACTION AND SUPPORT

FOR THE GOVERNMENT BY THE VARIOUS RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL GROUPINGS NECESSARILY LEAD TO LONG-TERM COOPERATION OR THE DIMINUTION OF FACTIONALISM. ONE EXAMPLE: ALTHOUGH MILITANT BUDDHIST LEADER [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] HAS ALREADY INDICATED HIS WILLINGNESS TO SUPPORT THE GVN TO THE EXTENT OF ESTABLISHING RECEPTION CENTERS FOR REFUGEES, HE HAS REFUSED TO MAKE A PUBLIC STATEMENT DENOUNCING THE VC FOR THEIR WIDESPREAD ATTACKS OR URGE HIS FOLLOWERS NOT TO SUPPORT THE VC. HIS REFUSAL TO ISSUE SUCH A STATEMENT IS PROBABLY RELATED TO HIS DESIRE TO AVOID ANY COMPROMISE OF HIS TRADITIONAL OPPOSITION TO THE PRESENT THIEU-KY REGIME.

13. IN SHORT, WHILE THERE ARE A NUMBER OF EXAMPLES OF TEMPORARY BACKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT DURING THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO DATE THAT ANY IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP IS SUBLIMATING VITAL INTERESTS. NEVERTHELESS, THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SHOCK AND CHALLENGE PRESENTED BY THE VC ATTACKS MAY GALVANIZE THE GOVERNMENT TO ACTION AND PROVIDE SUFFICIENT POPULAR ENTHUSIASM TO MAINTAIN FORWARD MOMENTUM AFTER THE IMMEDIATE CRISIS HAS PASSED.

14. THE ULTIMATE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE WILL DEPEND HEAVILY ON THE WAY THE GOVERNMENT HANDLES THE CRISIS FROM NOW ON. QUICK RESTORATION

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OF THE STATUS QUO ANTE BELLUM WOULD BE A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE GVN AND COULD RESTORE LOST CONFIDENCE. THERE IS POPULAR AGREEMENT AMONG VIETNAMESE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST ADDRESS ITSELF IMMEDIATELY TO A NUMBER OF SERIOUS OR POTENTIALLY SERIOUS PROBLEMS: SHORTAGES OF FOOD IN CERTAIN AREAS AND RESULTANT RISING PRICES, A SERIOUS NEW REFUGEE PROBLEM, THE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, CONSIDERABLE PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION AND DAMAGE, AND THE RESTORATION OF UTILITIES AND OTHER VITAL SERVICES, SUCH AS GARBAGE COLLECTION.

15. A NUMBER OF SOURCES HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT THE MAIN CONCERN OF MOST PEOPLE NOW IS THE SATISFACTION OF THEIR IMMEDIATE NEEDS. THE FACT THAT THE PRICE OF BREAD HAS RISEN FROM 10 TO 70 PIASTRES OVER-NIGHT AND THE PRICE OF A LITER OF RICE HAS RISEN FROM 15 TO 50 OR MORE PIASTRES CAUSES GENERAL CONCERN, EVEN THOUGH MOST OBSERVERS FEEL THE DISRUPTION IS ONLY TEMPORARY. TO MANY OF THE REFUGEES THE PROBLEM IS MUCH MORE SERIOUS, HAVING LOST THEIR HOMES, THEIR LIVELIHOOD, AND POSSIBLY THE BREAD WINNER IN THEIR FAMILY.

16. MEMBERS OF THE UPPER AND LOWER HOUSES, ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION, HAVE SUPPORTED PRESIDENT THIEU'S DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW AND THE OTHER MEASURES HE HAS TAKEN. AT THE SAME TIME MOST MEMBERS HAVE STRESSED THEIR CONCERN FOR CONSTITUTIONALITY AND THE RULE OF LAW.

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HOWEVER, AS INDICATED ABOVE, UP TO THIS MOMENT IT WOULD BE FAIR TO SAY THAT THEY HAVE GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT FULL SUPPORT AND HAVE AVOIDED STEPS WHICH MIGHT INDIRECTLY AID THE VC.

17. AS THE SITUATION STABILIZES, AND THE VC THREAT DIMINISHES, INDICATIONS ARE THAT THIS POSTURE OF UNQUESTIONED SUPPORT AND LIMITED, CAUTIOUS CRITICISM WILL CHANGE. THE ASSEMBLY MAY UNDERTAKE TO INVESTIGATE GOVERNMENT "UNPREPAREDNESS" AND TO AFFIX BLAME FOR REAL OR ALLEGED SHORTCOMINGS. SENATOR NGUYEN VAN NGAI IS URGING FELLOW SENATORS TO ENGAGE IN A FULL INVESTIGATION AFTER THE CRISIS IS PAST. HE IS ESPECIALLY CRITICAL OF MINISTER OF INTERIOR LIEUTENANT GENERAL LINH QUANG VIEN AND DIRECTOR GENERAL OF NATIONAL POLICE BRIGADIER GENERAL NGUYEN NGOC LOAN. SENATOR TRAN NGOC NHUAN IS ALSO PUSHING FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF III CORPS COMMANDER LIEUTENANT GENERAL LE NGUEYN KHANG AND CAPITAL MILITARY DISTRICT COMMANDER COLONEL NGUYEN VAN GIAM. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY WHETHER THEY ARE MOTIVATED BY PATRIOTIC OR PERSONAL REASONS OR HOW SERIOUS THEY ARE IN CARRYING OUT THE PROPOSED INVESTIGATIONS.

18. CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS IS NOT LIMITED, HOWEVER, TO MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE. THE CRISIS GENERATED BY THE VC ATTACKS MAY HAVE ATTENUATED, BUT CERTAINLY HAS NOT ELIMINATED, A FAVORITE

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VIETNAMESE PASTIME, CRITICISM OF OTHER VIETNAMESE. HARDLY ANY SENIOR VIETNAMESE LEADER HAS ESCAPED UNSCATHED. IN ADDITION TO THOSE CRITICIZED ABOVE, COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN REGISTERED AGAINST PRESIDENT TRIEU, CHIEF OF THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF GENERAL CAO VAN VIEN AND A STABLE OF LESSER LUMINARIES. PROBABLY THE SENIOR OFFICIAL WHO HAS RECEIVED THE MOST CRITICISM IS PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN VAN LOC. HIGH-LEVEL COLLEAGUES IN THE GOVERNMENT HAVE FOUND LOC SOMEWHAT BEWILDERED BY THE CRISIS. MINISTER OF FINANCE TRINH HAS BEEN CRITICAL OF LOC'S ROLE. VICE PRESIDENT KY IS KNOWN TO BE DISAPPOINTED WITH LOC.

19. IN SHORT, WHILE THE VC ATTACK HAS PROMOTED MOMENTARY UNITY AND OFFERS A PROMISING CHANCE TO CONSOLIDATE IT, THE FORCES THAT DIVIDE VIETNAMESE AND IMPAIR THEIR ABILITY TO COOPERATE WITH EACH OTHER REMAIN STRONG.

"ATTITUDES OF THE VIETNAMESE TOWARD AMERICANS"

20. ALTHOUGH THE OVERALL REACTION OF THE VIETNAMESE IS FAVORABLE TO THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE UNITED STATES FORCES DURING THE RECENT VC ATTACKS, A SURPRISING NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE APPARENTLY BELIEVE, OR PRETEND TO BELIEVE, THAT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN COLLUSION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE VC. ON 3 FEBRUARY A MEMBER OF THE LOWER HOUSE STATED ON THE FLOOR OF THE ASSEMBLY THAT PERHAPS THE VC WAS HELPED BY "WESTERN FRIENDS",

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IMPLYING THE AMERICANS. A NUMBER OF SOURCES HAVE STATED THAT MANY VIETNAMESE BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. SUPPORTED THE VC AND PERMITTED THEM TO COME INTO SAIGON IN ORDER TO FORCE THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT INTO AN UNWANTED COALITION WITH THE NFLSV. SURPRISINGLY, THESE VIEWS ARE HELD BY A NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE WITH RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS AT THE MIDDLE LEVEL OF THE GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY HIERARCHY.

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2. [REDACTED] TELLS OF A NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE WHO HAVE CALLED AT HIS HOME TO ASK HIM ABOUT THE AMERICAN ROLE IN THE VC ATTACKS ON SAIGON. SOME OF THEM HAD HEARD THAT THE AMERICANS HAD PROVIDED THE VC WITH TRANSPORTATION TO BRING THEIR TROOPS INTO SAIGON, PRESUMABLY TO PRESSURE THE GVN INTO AGREEING TO A COALITION GOVERNMENT. OTHERS AMONG THE VIETNAMESE VISITORS HAD HEARD THAT THE "HAWKS" IN THE U.S. HAD MANEUVERED THE VC INTO MAKING THE ATTACK ON SAIGON SO THAT THEY COULD GAIN SUPPORT FOR ESCALATING THE WAR. SOME HAD THE OPPOSITE VIEW; IT WAS THE "DOVES" WHO INSTIGATED THE ATTACK SO THAT THEY COULD CAPITALIZE ON THE ENEMY SHOW OF STRENGTH AND RESULTANT CASUALTIES TO ARGUE FOR AN EARLY SETTLEMENT OF THE WAR.

2. SIMILAR FLIGHTS INTO FANTASY WERE DESCRIBED TO OTHER SOURCES BY A WIDE CROSS SECTION OF VIETNAMESE. ONE SOURCE STATES THAT HE HAS TALKED WITH AT LEAST TEN OFFICERS IN THE ARVN WHO BELIEVE THAT THERE

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MAY HAVE BEEN COLLUSION BETWEEN U.S. AND VC FORCES. ANOTHER SOURCE HAS TALKED WITH SEVERAL NORTHERN REFUGEE CATHOLIC PRIESTS WHO ARE CONVINCED THAT THERE WAS COLLUSION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND VC.

21. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ISOLATE CLEAR-CUT REASONS FOR THESE ATTITUDES. EXPLANATIONS ADVANCED BY THE VIETNAMESE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR ARGUMENTS ARE EITHER BASED ON MISINFORMATION, ARE CLEARLY ILLOGICAL AND INCONSISTENT, OR BOTH, AT LEAST TO THE WESTERN MIND. IN SOME CASES THE VIETNAMESE APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY NFLSV RADIO BROADCASTS OR BY RUMORS PASSED BY VC CADRES. IN MANY CASES THE BELIEFS APPEAR TO SPRING FROM A GENERAL SUSPICION OF U.S. INTENTIONS AND OBJECTIVES. THE RECENT SPATE OF STORIES IN THE PRESS ABOUT SECRET NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE NFLSV, AND THE STRONG U.S. DESIRE TO SET UP A COALITION GOVERNMENT WITH THE NFLSV, HAVE APPARENTLY IMPRESSED MANY VIETNAMESE AND MADE THEM SUSCEPTIBLE TO ALLEGATIONS (RUMORS) OF COLLUSION.

22. MANY VIETNAMESE WHO ORIGINALLY SHARED THE VIEW THAT THERE WAS COLLUSION BETWEEN THE U.S. AND VC GAVE UP SUCH VIEWS WHEN CONFRONTED WITH OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE TO THE CONTRARY. A VIETNAMESE PARATROOP OFFICER SAID HE FELT, AS MANY OTHERS DID, THAT THE AMERICANS WERE

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

1.5(e)
3.4(b)(1)~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~

(classification)

(dissem controls)

SUPPORTING THE VC. THE RECENT FLURRY OF NEWSPAPER COMMENTS ON PEACE
NEGOTIATIONS WERE REPOSIBLE FOR THIS VIEW. AFTER LISTENING ^{TO} THE NFLSV
RADIO, HOWEVER, THIS NOTION HAS DISPELLED AS THE RADIO CLAIMED THE ATT-
ACK WAS A REVOLT OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PEOPLE. A VIETNAMESE HOUSEWIFE
SAID SHE ACCEPTED THE VIEW THAT THE AMERICANS HAD SUPPORTED THE VC UNTIL
SHE
/WITNESSED AMERICAN FORCES FIGHTING IN THE STREETS AGAINST THE VC.
HOWEVER, OTHER VIETNAMESE CONTINUE TO HOLD THEIR VIEWS ABOUT U.S.
COLLUSION DESPITE THE EVIDENCE.

23. A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THESE BELIEFS IS THAT MANY VIET-
NAMESE HAVE BECOME CONDITIONED TO THINK THAT NOTHING HAPPENS IN VIET-
NAM UNLESS THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WANTS IT TO HAPPEN. WHEN
EVENTS TAKE PLACE THAT ARE CLEARLY COUNTER TO OUR BEST INTERESTS,
INSTEAD OF ADMITTING THAT THEY WERE WRONG, THE VIETNAMESE OFTEN PUT
FORTH BIZARRE EXPLANATIONS TO EXPLAIN WHY THE U.S. WANTED DEVELOPMENTS
TO TAKE SUCH A SEEMINGLY UNFAVORABLE TWIST. UNABLE TO COMPREHEND
THAT VC RESPONSE MAY HAVE EXCEEDED U.S. EXPECTATIONS, THESE VIET-
NAMESE INSTEAD TRY TO RATIONALIZE WHY THE U.S. WANTED THE VC TO SUCCEED
EVEN AT THE COST OF U.S. PERSONNEL AND PROPERTY, NOT TO MENTION THE
COST TO A CLOSE ALLY.

24. STILL, THESE ACCOUNTS SHOULD NOT BE OVEREMPHASIZED. THE VAST

~~S-E-C-R-E-T~~1.5(e)
3.4(b)(1)

S-E-R-E-T

(classification)

(dissem controls)

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION CONTINUES TO SUPPORT U.S. PRESENCE AND APPRECIATES U.S. ACTIONS AND SACRIFICES. AN OLDTIME VIETNAMESE NATIONALIST POINTS OUT THAT IN HIS VIEW THE VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES COULD NOT HAVE TURNED BACK THE VC THRUST AGAINST THE CAPITAL IF THEY HAD NOT BEEN SUPPORTED BY U.S. FORCES. HE SAID THAT HIS FRIENDS FEEL THE SAME WAY. SOME SOURCES EVEN CONTEND THAT THE U.S. CARRIED THE BRUNT OF THE FIGHT AGAINST THE VC AND WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR SAVING THE CITY FROM A VC TAKEOVER. AN EX-ARVN OFFICER BELIEVES THAT THE U.S. SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR ITS EFFECTIVE BUT MEASURED REACTION TO THE VC THREAT. THIS SOURCE COMPARED U.S. PRUDENCE WITH THE FRENCH PENCHANT FOR OVER-REACTION. HE OBSERVED THAT THE AMERICANS EMPLOYED ARTILLERY AND AIR SUPPORT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO MINIMIZE CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, SOMETHING WHICH, IN HIS OPINION, THE FRENCH WOULD NEVER HAVE DONE. HOWEVER, SEVERAL OTHER SOURCES HAVE CRITICIZED THE U.S. FORCES FOR DESTROYING VIETNAMESE LIVES AND PROPERTY IN COMBAT OPERATIONS. ALTHOUGH HARD FACTS ARE DIFFICULT TO COME BY, THERE ARE MANY STORIES CIRCULATING CONCERNING THE NUMBER OF CIVILIAN CASUALTIES, AND THE AMOUNT OF PROPERTY DAMAGE CAUSED BY U.S. ARTILLERY AND AIR SUPPORT MISSIONS.

27. FIELD DISSEM: STATE USMACV 7TH AIR FORCE DIR/JUSPAO (MR. ZORTHIAN ONLY) CINCPAC PACFLT ARPAC PACAF.

1.5(c)
3.4(b)(1)

SECRET

(classification)

(dissem controls)